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an infusion of learning into word-painting, although an object of the rarest attainment, will alone raise our authors to a level with those of European fame.

The bare details of external nature, and a presentation of the thousand forms and imagery that offer themselves to the comprehension of the senses, where the deeper awakenings of thought have never been called into play, constitutes the rudimental portion of literature. Word-painting alone will not lead us into the arcana of our cosmic system, where the highest conceptions of beauty lie—only to be laid open to the understanding, and thence to light up the imagination, by the powerful wand of science.

JAMES HENRY.

The Poetry of Architecture; or the Architecture of the Nations of Europe, considered in its Association with Natural Scenery and National Character. By JOHN RUSKIN.

NO. II.—THE COTTAGE—CONTINUED.

2. THE LOWLAND COTTAGE. — ITALY.

"Most musical, most melancholy."

LET it not be thought that we are unnecessarily detaining our readers from the proposed subject, if we premise a few remarks on the character of the landscape of the country we have now entered. It will always be necessary to obtain some definite knowledge of the distinctive features of a country, before we can form a just estimate of the beauties or the errors of its architecture. We wish our readers to imbue themselves, as far as may be, with the spirit of the clime which we are now entering; to cast away all general ideas; to look only for unison of feeling, and to pronounce everything wrong which is contrary to the *humors* of nature. We must make them feel where they are; we must throw a peculiar light and color over their imaginations; then we will bring their judgment into play, for then it will be capable of just operation. We have passed, it must be observed (in leaving England and France for Italy), from comfort to desolation; from excitement to sadness; we have left one country prosperous in its prime, and another frivolous in its age, for one glorious in its death. Now, we have prefixed the hackneyed line of *Il Penseroso* to our paper, because it is a definition of the essence of the beautiful. What is most musical, will always be found most melancholy; and no real beauty can be obtained without a touch of sadness. Whenever the beautiful loses its melancholy, it degenerates into prettiness. We appeal to the memories of all our observing readers, whether they have treasured up any scene, pretending to be more than pretty, which has not about it either a tinge of melancholy, or a sense of danger: the one constitutes the beautiful, the other the sublime. This postulate being granted, as we are sure it will be by most (and we beg to assure those who are refractory or argumentative, that, were this a treatise on the sublime and beautiful, we could convince and quell their incredulity, to their entire satisfaction, by innumerable instances), we proceed to remark here, once for all, that the principal glory of the Italian landscape is its extreme melancholy. It is fitting that it should be so: the dead are the nations

of Italy; her name and her strength are dwelling with the pale nations underneath the earth; the chief and chosen boast of her utmost pride is the *hæc jacet*; she is but one wide sepulchre, and all her present life is like a shadow or a memory. And, therefore, or rather, by a most beautiful coincidence, her national tree is the cypress; and whoever has marked the peculiar character which these noble shadowy spires can give to her landscape, lifting their majestic troops of waving darkness from beside the fallen column, or out of the midst of the silence of the shadowed temple and worshipless shrine, seen far and wide over the blue of the faint plain, without loving the dark trees for their sympathy with the sadness of Italy's sweet cemetery shore, is one who profanes her soil with his footsteps.

Every part of the landscape is in unison; the same glory of mourning is thrown over the whole; the deep blue of the heavens is mingled with that of the everlasting hills, or melted away into the silence of the sapphire sea; the pale cities, temple and tower, lie gleaming along the champaign; but how calmly! no hum of men; no motion of multitude in the midst of them; they are voiceless as the city of ashes. The transparent air is gentle among the blossoms of the orange, and the dim leaves of the olive; and the small fountains, which, in any other land, would spring merrily along, sparkling and singing among tinkling pebbles, here flow calmly and silently into some pale font of marble, all beautiful with life, worked by some unknown hand, long ago nerveless, and fall and pass on among wan flowers, and scented copse, through cool leaf-lighted canes or grey Egerian grottos, to join the Tiber or Eridanus, to swell the waves of Nemi, or the Sarian Lake. The most minute objects (leaf, flower, and stone), while they add to the beauty, seem to share in the sadness, of the whole. But, if one principal character of Italian landscape is melancholy, another is elevation. We have no simple rusticity of scene, no cowslip and buttercup humility of seclusion. Tall mulberry trees, with festoons of the luxuriant vine, purple with ponderous clusters, trailed and trellised between and over them, shade the wide fields of stately Indian corn; luxuriance of lofty vegetation (catalpa, and aloe, and olive), ranging itself in lines of massy light along the wan champaign, guides the eye away to the unfailing wall of mountain, Alp or Apennine; no cold; long range of shivering grey, but dazzling light of snow, or undulating breadth of blue, fainter and darker in infinite variety; peak, precipice, and promontory, passing away into the wooded hills, each with its tower or white village sloping into the plain; castellated battlements cresting their undulations; some wide majestic river gliding along the champaign, the bridge on its breast and the city on its shores; the whole canopied with clouded azure, basking in mistless sunshine, breathing the silence of odoriferous air. Now comes the question. In a country of this pomp of natural glory, tempered with melancholy memory of departed pride, what are we to wish for, what are we naturally to expect, in the character of her most humble edifices; those which are most connected with present life, least with the past? What are we to consider fitting or beautiful in her cottage? We do not ex-

pect it to be comfortable, when everything around it betokens decay and desolation in the works of man. We do not wish it to be neat, where nature is most beautiful, because neglected. But we naturally look for an elevation of character, a richness of design or form, which, while the building is kept a cottage, may yet give it a peculiar air of cottage aristocracy; a beauty (no matter how dilapidated) a beauty which may appear to have been once fitted for the surrounding splendor of scene and climate. Now, let us fancy an Italian cottage before us. The reader who has travelled in Italy will find little difficulty in recalling one to his memory, with its broad lines of light and shadow, and its strange, but not unpleasant mixture of grandeur and desolation.

Let us examine its details, enumerate its architectural peculiarities, and see how far it agrees with our preconceived idea of what the cottage ought to be? The first remarkable point of the building is the roof. It generally consists of tiles of very deep curvature, which rib it into distinct vertical lines, giving it a far more agreeable surface than that of our flatter tiling. The *form* of the roof, however, is always excessively flat, so as never to let it intrude upon the eye; and the consequence is, that, while an English village, seen at a distance, appears all red roof, the Italian is all white wall; and, therefore, though always bright, is never gaudy. We have in these roofs an excellent example of what should always be kept in mind—that everything will be found beautiful, which climate or situation render useful. The strong and constant heat of the Italian sun would be intolerable if admitted at the window; and, therefore, the edges of the roof project far over the walls, and throw long shadows downwards, so as to keep the upper windows constantly cool. These long oblique shadows on the white surface are always delightful, and are alone sufficient to give the building character. They are peculiar to the buildings of Spain and Italy; for, owing to the general darker color of those of more northerly climates, the shadows of their roofs, however far thrown, do not tell distinctly, and render them not varied but gloomy. Another ornamental use of these shadows is, that they break the line of junction of the wall with the roof: a point always desirable, and in every kind of building, whether we have to do with lead, slate, tile, or thatch, one of extreme difficulty. This object is further forwarded in the Italian cottage, by putting two or three windows up under the very eaves themselves, which is also done for coolness, so that their tops are formed by the roof; and the wall has the appearance of having been terminated by large battlements, and roofed over. And, finally, the eaves are seldom kept long on the same level: double or treble rows of tiling are introduced; long sticks and irregular woodwork are occasionally attached to them, to assist the festoons of the vine; and the graceful irregularity and marked character of the whole, must be dwelt on with equal delight by the eye of the poet, the artist, or the unprejudiced architect. All, however, is exceedingly humble; we have not yet met with the elevation of character we expected. We shall find it, however, as we proceed. The next point of interest is

the window. The modern Italian is completely owl-like in his habits. All the daytime, he lies idle and inert; but, during night he is all activity: but it is mere activity of inoccupation. Idleness, partly induced by the temperature of the climate, and partly consequent on the decaying prosperity of the nation, leaves indications of its influence on all his undertakings. He prefers patching up a ruin to building a house; he raises shops and hovels, the abodes of inactive, vegetating, brutish poverty, under the protection of the aged and ruined, yet stalwart arches of the Roman amphitheatre; and the habitations of the lower orders frequently present traces of ornament and stability, of material evidently belonging to the remains of a prouder edifice. This is the case, sometimes, to such a degree, as, in another country, would be disagreeable from its impropriety; but in Italy it corresponds with the general predominance of the features of a past age, and is always beautiful. Thus, the eye rests with delight on the broken mouldings of the windows, and the sculptured capitals of the corner columns, contrasted, as they are, the one with the glossless blackness within—the other with the ragged and dirty confusion of drapery around.

The Italian window, in general, is a mere hole in the thick wall, always well proportioned; occasionally arched at the top, sometimes with the addition of a little rich ornament; seldom, if ever, having any casement or glass, but filled up with any bit of striped or colored cloth, which may have the slightest chance of deceiving the distant observer into the belief that it is a legitimate blind. This keeps off the sun, and allows a free circulation of air, which is the great object. When it is absent, the window becomes a mere black hole, having much the same relation to a glazed window that the hollow of a skull has to a bright eye; not unexpressive, but frowning and ghastly, and giving a disagreeable impression of utter emptiness and desolation within. Yet there is character in them: the black dots tell agreeably on the walls at a distance, and have no disagreeable sparkle, to disturb the repose of surrounding scenery. Besides, the temperature renders every thing agreeable to the eye, which gives it an idea of ventilation. A few roughly constructed balconies, projecting from detached windows, usually break the uniformity of the wall. In some Italian cottages there are wooden galleries, resembling those so frequently seen in Switzerland; but this is not a very general character, except in the mountain valleys of North Italy, although sometimes a passage is effected from one projecting portion of a house to another, by means of an exterior gallery. These are very delightful objects; and when shaded by luxuriant vines, which is frequently the case, imparts a gracefulness to the building otherwise unattainable. The next striking point is the arcade at the base of the building. This is general in cities; and, though frequently wanting to the cottage, is present often enough to render it an important feature. In fact, the Italian cottage is usually found in groups. Isolated buildings are rare; and the arcade forms an agreeable, if not necessary shade, in passing from one building to another. It is a still a more unfailing feature of the

Swiss city, where it is useful in deep snow. But the supports of the arches in Switzerland are generally square masses of wall, varying in size, separating the arches by irregular intervals, and sustained by broad and massy buttresses; while, in Italy, the arches generally rest on legitimate columns, varying in height from three and a half to four diameters, with huge capitals, not unfrequently rich in detail. These give great gracefulness to the buildings in groups: they will be spoken of more at large, when we are treating of arrangement and situation.

The square tower, rising over the roof of the further cottage, will not escape observation. It has been allowed to remain, not because such elevated buildings ever belong to mere cottages, but, first, that the truth of the scene might not be destroyed; and secondly, because it is impossible, or nearly so, to obtain a group of buildings of any sort, in Italy, without one or more such rising behind them, beautifully contributing to destroy the monotony, and contrast with the horizontal lines of the flat roofs and square walls. We think it right, therefore, to give the cottage the relief and contrast which, in reality, it possessed, even though we are at present speaking of it in the abstract.

Having now reviewed the distinctive parts of the Italian cottage in detail, we shall proceed to direct our attention to points of general character. 1. Simplicity of form. The roof, being flat, allows of no projecting garret windows, no fantastic gable ends: the walls themselves are equally flat; no bow-windows or sculptured ariels, such as we meet with perpetually in Germany, France, or the Netherlands, vary their white fronts.

Now, this simplicity is, perhaps, the principal attribute by which the Italian cottage attains the elevation of character we desired and expected. All that is fantastic in form, or frivolous in detail, annihilates the aristocratic air of a building; it at once destroys its sublimity and size, besides awakening, as is almost always the case, associations of a mean and low character. The moment we see a gable roof, we think of cock-lofts; the instant we observe a projecting window, of attics and tent-bedsteads. Now, the Italian cottage assumes, with the simplicity, *l'air noble*, of buildings of a higher order; and, though it avoids all ridiculous miniature mimicry of the palace, it discards the humbler attributes of the cottage. The ornament it assumes is dignified; no grinning faces or unmeaning notched planks, but well proportioned arches, or tastefully sculptured columns. While there is nothing about it unsuited to the humility of its inhabitant, there is a general dignity in its air, which harmonizes beautifully with the nobility of the neighboring edifices, or the glory of the surrounding scenery. 2. Brightness of effect. There are no weather stains on the walls; there is no dampness in air or earth, by which they could be induced; the heat of the sun scorches away all lichens, and mosses and mouldy vegetation. No thatch or stone crop on the roof unites the building with surrounding vegetation; all is clear and warm, and sharp on the eye; the more distant the building, the more generally bright it becomes, till the distant village sparkles out of the orange copse or the cypress grove, with so much distinct-

ness as might be thought in some degree objectionable. But it must be remembered that the prevailing color of Italian landscape is blue; sky, hills, water, are equally azure. The olive, which forms a great proportion of the vegetation, is not green, but grey; the cypress and its varieties, dark and neutral, and the laurel and myrtle far from bright. Now, white, which is intolerable with green, is agreeable contrasted with blue, and to this cause it must be ascribed that the white of the Italian building is not found startling or disagreeable in the landscape. That it is not, we believe, will be generally allowed. 3. Elegance of feeling. We never can prevent ourselves from imagining that we perceive, in the graceful negligence of the Italian cottage, the evidence of a taste among the lower orders, refined by the glory of their land and the beauty of its remains. We have always had strong faith in the influence of climate on the mind, and feel strongly tempted to discuss the subject at length; but our paper has already exceeded its proposed limits, and we must content ourselves with remarking what will not, we think, be disputed, that the eye, by constantly resting either on natural scenery of noble tone and character, or on the architectural remains of classical beauty, must contract a habit of feeling correctly and tastefully; the influence of which, we think, is seen in the style of edifices the most modern and the most humble. Lastly, dilapidation.

We have just used the term "graceful negligence;" whether it be graceful, or not, is a matter of taste; but the uncomfortable and ruinous disorder and dilapidation of the Italian cottage is one of observation. The splendor of the climate requires nothing more than shade from the sun, and occasionally shelter from violent storm: the outer arcade affords them both; it becomes the nightly lounge and daily dormitory of its inhabitant, and the interior is abandoned to filth and decay. Indolence watches the tooth of Time, with careless eye, and nerveless hand. Religion, or its abuse, reduces every individual of the population to utter inactivity three days out of the seven; and the habits formed in the three, regulate the four. Abject poverty takes away the power, while brutish sloth weakens the will; and the filthy habits of the Italian prevent him from suffering from the state to which he is reduced. The shattered roofs, the dark, confused, ragged windows, the obscure chambers, the tattered and dirty draperies, altogether present a picture which, seen too near, is sometimes revolting to the eye, always melancholy to the mind. Yet even this many would not wish to be otherwise. The prosperity of nations, as of individuals, is cold, and hard-hearted, and forgetful. The dead die, indeed, trampled down by the crowd of the living; the place thereof shall know them no more, for that place is not in the hearts of the survivors for whose interest they have made way. But adversity and ruin point to the sepulchre; and it is not trodden on; to the chronicle, and it doth not decay. Who would substitute the rush of a new nation, the struggle of an awakening power, for the dreamy sleep of Italy's desolation, for her sweet silence of melancholy thought, her twilight time of everlasting memories? Such, we think, are the principle distinctive attributes of

the Italian cottage. Let it not be thought that we are wasting time in the contemplation of its beauties; even though they are of a kind which the architect can never imitate, because he has no command over time, and no choice of situation; and which he ought not to imitate, if he could, because they are only locally desirable or admirable. Our object, let it always be remembered, is not the attainment of architectural data, but the formation of taste.

October 12, 1837.

OUR COINAGE.

The coinage of a country, while it may be considered as illustrative of its institutions, advance in civilization, and progress in the fine Arts, may be made useful in strengthening its character, and cultivating its taste. Leaving to the learned in such matters, an exposition of the historical use of coins, I would call the attention of the people to the fact, that large sums of money have been spent upon our coinage, without any adequate result; and that our gold, silver, and copper, instead of being examples of the artistic ability of the country, are far below the requirements of public taste. Science and the mechanic arts are called upon to furnish the basis of an excellent coinage, and they perform their work faithfully, but that which gives dignity and beauty, that which distinguishes the civilized from the barbarous is utterly wanting. The devices upon our coins are incoherent, unmeaning, monstrous; responding to no idea of the people, whose servants utter them; unworthy to compete in execution with the buttons on foreign liveries. After losing sight, for some years, of the United States coin, my eyes having been accustomed to the delicately-cut European currency, and wishing to procure American gold in Havre, I hesitated accepting it at the hands of a respectable banker, its clumsy execution giving it so strongly the appearance of a barefaced counterfeit. I found it was good gold, only spoiled in appearance. It is unnecessary to waste much criticism upon the "fowl of freedom," as he now appears upon our coins. This bastard offspring of heraldry, rejoicing in his unnatural ugliness, is so far removed from nature, that he needs a label quite as much as the figure of Liberty, which is furnished with one. He seems to have been nailed up as his kinsman the hawk is sometimes served, and in like manner to have suffered the vicissitudes of wind and rain.

But the Liberty! Involuntarily we exclaim with the noble Frenchwoman, "Oh, Liberty! how many atrocities are perpetrated in thy name!" Her millions of effigies are scattered among our people, to the utter confusion of every American idea of the word. *This* is a Liberty that would rejoice tyrants. Her dislocated limbs indicate weakness, her timid attitude expresses fear, for she is looking hurriedly over her shoulder in manifest alarm. In her left hand she holds a staff; would it were a distaff, to give some hint at independence, instead of supporting a cap, which seems ready for use in begging. I think we should call this cap, the office cap. The shield, which serves as an ostentatious label, is also useful to hide her means of support; perhaps the office cap is deemed sufficient. Her feet are completely enveloped in drapery, and perhaps

this is better; since, if little drapery covers a multitude of sins, what might be done with a great deal. We will pass by the shapeless and ill-matched arms, and the melancholy length of legs, confident that the reader will agree with us, that this figure is a shameful caricature of a most noble subject. Is this the best thing that we can show upon our coins, as the result of the last twenty years' progress? Is this the artistic language by which we would have foreign nations respect our institutions, or posterity measure our refinement? So it will be, and while we write this protest against the indecent neglect, while California is yet uncoined, and our currency in its youth, this same system will continue. It will be found that nobody is responsible, nobody to blame, that money will do its work just as well with one device as another, and so the matter will end. It may be otherwise; it may be that a true view of the subject will come home to somebody who has influence somewhere; that the person somewhere will stir up somebody else, to try to do something about it; and if the person represented as somebody else, does try, and succeeds, and if he is a capable man, he will merit, and I doubt not receive, the thanks of all persons of sense as well as taste, of the present and future generations.

LETTERS FROM ITALY—No. III.

FLORENCE, August 10, 1854.

DEAR PAULINA:—The ideas which I endeavored to express to you in my last letter, in relation to the early Christian Art, were suggested by a certain picture, painted by the Fra Angelico, of whom mention was made, as representing that Art in its purity, which picture is hung upon the wall opposite our corridor window, chosen to illumine my page this lovely summer morning. I have reserved this painting to be the last object in this long outer hall, of which to write, although it is one of the first in point of locality, and must be passed by all who visit the galleries, and for this reason—few love it. Yonder painter—he with the Titian-like head, who copies Titian, and is even now making a reduced copy of the wonderful Venus, and what is truly rare, who *can* do it, and he alone of all the multitude of artists who throng the galleries of Italy, *he* smiled a smile of gentle pity when I spoke to him of the Angels by Fra Angelico.

He thought I loved Art, that I had a soul that recognized the fine, subtle mystery, the marvellous significance of *color*. He thought I was one of the few privileged, blessed ones, permitted to ascend to the higher circle, the celestial plane. "The holy city! Not in form shall lie its glory—not in form, but in the purity, in the inconceivable magnificence of *color*. Oh! it was a prophecy—an inspiration—the voice of God, revealing to us, through the medium of one of the most exquisite organizations the world has ever known, that prophet of Patmos, the nature of angelic worlds, and lo! above all, the gates of pearl, the golden streets, the walls of precious stones, filling the heavens with colors too gorgeous for mortal vision. Ah, see! for us, the pearly lights, the gold, and the carnations! See the inward gleaming blue of human eyes, like the light of gems! Mark the broad splendor of yonder drapery, and note the exquisite *quality* of all the hues," and he gazed steadfastly, with half averted head, upon the matchless work of the Venetian, unmindful of the surrounding throng, and forgetful of him whose love of the unskilled Angelico, had suggested his "rapture." I felt that it was true, this estimate of the effect of light. Color was to me a perpetual

joy, at all times, everywhere; I felt its full significance, it was to my eye what music was to my ear; I believed, and still believe, that no single influence acting upon the spirit through the senses, has the power that hues and tones have. So sensitive had I become to their influence that the great stained window back of the altar in Santa Maria Novella was within me, a power identical with that of a most glorious anthem, or the pealing of bells. Flowers reached the same cord which vibrated beneath the touch of a bird-note, and I believe that the poetical association of the rose-tone and the nightingale-tone had its foundation in the profoundest depths of the human soul. Here also I recall a fancy, it may seem, but one which fills me with happiness, and one, moreover, that the developed soul will find a large truth, I doubt not. Let one who is susceptible to the influence of light and color, gaze into the depths of summer sky at night, when the whole dome above him is filled with violet-hued light, and gemmed over with stars infinitely varied in their tints, yet all toned to the finest harmony, and he will experience two sensations, equally rapturous, one of which he will trace to the immeasurable beauty of colors acting upon him, and the other beyond that, as the stars are beyond the violet sky, he will recognize, or imagine perhaps, to be the effect of sweet sounds, inaudible to sense, yet, nevertheless received, and answered too, by the finer spirit within, and through which he comprehends the significance of the prophet's words, "The stars sang together."

How then, in view of this feeling for color, could I love a work of Art, wherein, when I saw as an artist, I found no truth of coloring, indeed, found all the precious principles of light and shade, of tone and time, neglected, nay, violated.

In order to answer this question which daily arose, especially after my interview with my Titian-like friend, I have waited, and, notwithstanding my questionings and the sneers of my fellow students, kept my love for the saints and young angels of the artist monk of Fiesole, through all, direct and deep; and I am now convinced that the power exerted by these creations of his hand over those who revere truth, as well as love the symbols of truth, in spite of such enormous defects as false drawing and false coloring, proves that in some other respect they must conform most exquisitely to the laws, the deep vital principles of Art. The color of yonder angel's face, the one with the golden trumpet, does not present itself as color; I see only the ineffable glory of the countenance. It comes as beauty and purity immaterialized, and my soul entertains it as a guest whose footsteps shook not the threshold of sense.

The rich golds and carnations, made richer by the water-hues of the Lagunes, which Titian and Giorgione gathered from the gleaming arms and cheeks of Venetian maids, would find no place upon *that* form, *those* features; for color is related to emotion, to passion, and that by fixed laws, just as difficult to comprehend as is the emotional nature of man. The coloring of the Venus of the Tribune would be more false, were it transferred to this angel's head, than these feeble tints from the palette of the monk. Were it thus I should no longer be unconscious of the art employed; the exquisite flesh tints would assert themselves, as such, and the unrivalled spiritual beauty of the painting would be marred. With the Venus it is otherwise. *There* the tones harmonize completely with the best thought, the highest ideal of the subject. The colors spread upon the canvass in such rich profusion, upon drapery, jewels and flowers, are as so many sweet sounds brought into perfect accord with the principal note, strengthening and confirming *that* in its expression of the splendid theme; hence through this truly wonderful harmony the painting justly takes its place at the head of the department of color in Art. But with these faces of saints, such harmony is be-